

Personnel Section

When the Department began operations in 1937, no one was designated to handle personnel management responsibilities. Each division, and often each supervisor, shouldered the duties. Reading over the minutes of Commission meetings, it is interesting to note how big a part the commissioners themselves played in recruiting and handling employee problems.

Commissioner John Case objected to hiring married women, on the grounds they ought to be home tending to their families. He was overruled by the rest of the commission, but it points up the interest commissioners exhibited in the employee picture—and their biases! They were breaking new ground, and wanted assurance that things would go right, hence their interest in matters that today are routinely handled by personnel systems. For example, the commissioners did the interviewing for the first conservation agents, splitting the chore among them. But as time went on, they participated less and less, although even today no employee is hired or fired without commission approval.

By 1958, the work force had grown to 466 employees and Director William Towell decided a *more* formal system was needed to handle employee matters. The Commission approved appointment of a personnel officer and Ray M. Wells, who had been heading the Field Service Section, was given the **job**.¹ His task was to standardize such functions as recruitment and selection, personnel record keeping, and benefits administration. Implicit in the charge was the study of programs that might more closely knit a growing organization. The Director appointed a personnel committee composed of some of the top administrators to review all personnel matters, and the personnel officer works largely through this committee.

Any agency has three resources to manage: physical, financial and human. The Per-



Ray M. Wells, former Field Service chief; was picked to head the new Personnel Section in 1958. Director Towell felt a work force of 466 employees needed a permanent framework for personnel functions.

sonnel Section's job is to elicit the most effective use of the human resource while providing personal satisfaction to them. Some of the functions that accomplish this are (1) personnel policy development and research, (2) recruitment, selection and placement of the best employees possible, (3) benefits administration, (4) performance appraisal and records maintenance, (5) compensation and classification administration, and (6) training and development.

Personnel policies are necessary for supervisors to act in a consistent manner when faced with similar situations. It is Personnel's

¹ Personnel officers have been Ray M. Wells (1958-1975), Gerald L. Howell (1975-1977) and Roger E. Ponder since 1977.



Early selection procedures for job applicants included extensive testing, but these were abandoned in 1976. Here, a candidate for a job in 1963 is interviewed by Dan Saults, Vernon Bennett, Ray Wells, James Bailey and Paul Brooks.

job to recommend to administration policies that develop a climate for effective performance and uniformity of action. Such policies, whether new or revised, are reviewed by the personnel committee before submission to the director and Commission for adoption.

In recruitment and selection of manpower the Department has enjoyed an embarrassment of riches. Its reputation is so good and competition so keen for most jobs that screening applicants is a major chore. Using job opportunities announcements, advertisements, college recruitment and application files, Personnel can provide supervisors with a wide selection of applicants to consider.

Early selection procedures included a

battery of pre-employment tests, including general intelligence tests. These were abandoned in 1976. The customary written and oral examinations required for conservation agent trainees were dropped after 1977, when the Commission approved a change in educational requirements from high school completion to graduation from an accredited college with a bachelor's degree in appropriate fields. Instead, a panel of Department employees (and sometimes knowledgeable outsiders) question applicants about job knowledge and skills to determine the best individual for the job.

Employee benefits, apart from salary, make up a part of the total personnel package administered by the section. In 1960, a group



Personnel Section has guided the standardization of recruitment and interview processes. The procedure includes wide advertisement of job openings, initial screenings conducted by Personnel and an interview panel made up of Department employees.

health and life insurance program was implemented which was mandatory for all male employees except those over age fifty-five. Female employees could choose to participate. In 1978, enrollment became voluntary for all employees. Beyond the insurance benefits, Personnel Section has responsibility for retirement, leave systems, unemployment insurance, wellness and employee assistance programs, special achievement awards and service awards.

It is important for both supervisors and employees to know how they are doing on the job, and the Department has had some form of job performance rating system for many years. These records, along with other information regarding employee work history,

are centrally maintained by Personnel Section.

It was in the area of compensation and classification that the biggest personnel flap occurred in 1974. The Department hired a personnel consultant to develop a revised pay plan and job classification schedule. It was the latter that caused an uproar as old relations between various jobs, going back many years, were recommended for change under a point-factor method used to classify positions. Employee morale suffered and the Director ordered the personnel committee to revise the plan to be more acceptable. This was done and three pay schedule classes were established: labor and trades, professional and managerial, and general service, and three

salary schedules were adopted. The modified system is in use today.

Recognition that employees must be afforded an opportunity for development led Personnel Section into training and development programs. Throughout the years a variety of workshops and seminars have been conducted on topics ranging from communications and human relations to supervisory and management techniques. The Section also handles the new employee orientation class, where new employees are given an intensive one-week course in all Department programs and functions. It also participates in conservation agent training classes, enforcement training and safety training classes.

The Personnel Section prepares and main-

tains, with the assistance of other Department staff, special printed materials such as the Job Description Manual, Administrative and Personnel Management Manual and special memoranda on current developments in procedures and operations.

Since its inception in 1958, Personnel Section has grown along with the Department. There now are four professional and six clerical personnel handling the complex affairs relating to Department employees. The Department now totals over a thousand permanent employees, all with needs and aspirations that must be met in order to most effectively manage the state's wildlife and forestry resources.



Personnel Section offers employees in-house training in diverse aspects of job effectiveness. Topics ranging from management techniques to communications meet the needs of a work force that has grown to over 1,000 permanent employees.